

Levi Gale House (Jewish Community Center)
89 Touro Street
Newport
Newport County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-328

HABS
RI,
3-NEWP,
52-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

LEVI GALE HOUSE (JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER)

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RI,
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Location: 89 Touro Street, at southeast corner of Touro and Division Streets.

Present Owner: Raymond H. Hawksley, et als (trustees of Congregation Jeshuat Israel)

Present Occupants: Congregation Jeshuat Israel.

Present Use: Community and youth center.

Statement of Significance: This house was designed by Russell Warren, one of Rhode Island's most distinguished architects of the 19th century. With its strong cubic shape and rich Corinthian decoration, it is an important and creative example of the Greek Revival in domestic architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

The building is located in Plat 24, Lot 53. The following is an incomplete chain of title from Newport City Clerk's Records for the city of Newport. Reference is to number and volume of the Land Evidence Books, (LEB.--, p.--).

1823 Deed of July 11, 1823, recorded in LEB. 16, p. 216.

From: John P. Mann (physician)
To: Levi H. Gale
For: \$450

"... A certain lot... bounded Northerly on the Court House Square, Easterly partly on land of Robert Brayton deceased, and partly on land of Mr. Rousmaniere, Westerly on Washington Square, and Southerly on Ann Street, (Touro Street)... same land bought on August 8, 1806, by Louis Rousmaniere from Peleg Easton and William Easton... " (Probably lot the Gale House was built on.)

1832 Deed of October 24, 1832, recorded in LEB. 19, p. 146.

From: Elizabeth Rousmaniere
To: Levi H. Gale
For: \$1100

"... lot of land with buildings... bounded Westerly on the mall on Washington Square, Southerly on Touro Street, Northerly partly on said Washington Square and partly on land now or late belonging to John A. Collins, Easterly on land now or late belonging to representatives of Robert Brayton, deceased, and partly on a Street at the head of Washington Square..."

1834 Deed of October 2, 1834, recorded in LEB. 20, p. 183.

From: Town of Newport
To: Levi H. Gale, Captain

Gale received enough land to project the front steps and walk from the west portico onto city property in exchange for maintenance of a new gate, fence, and walk bordering on the mall. Plat map is attached showing location of Gale's house.

1834 Deed of November 11, 1834, recorded in LEB. 20, p. 136.

From: William R. Rotch and James Coggeshall
To: Levi H. Gale
For: \$2,570

"... two parcels of land: one... Northerly on Washington Street, Easterly on Union Street, Southerly on land late property of Louis Rousmaniere, Westerly on land belonging to heirs of Robert Brayton and partly on land late belonging to the said Rousmaniere... with a dwelling house and other buildings... being the estate granted to grantors by R.I. Union Bk. by deed March 29, 1833... other parcel... Northerly on land of Nichols Hassard, forty eight feet, Easterly on Spring Street, two feet, and Westerly on a street at the head of Washington Square leading from said Square into Touro Street... bought by grantor from Marcy Carey, April 12, 1833..."

1834 Agreement of November 11, 1834, recorded in LEB. 20, p. 139.

Between: Levi H. Gale and Nichols Hassard, inn keeper

"... Gale has this day purchased the estate now occupied by the said Hassard of William R. Rotch and James Coggeshall, and of the said Hassard, with the view to alter and repair the same... Gale to lease to said Hassard the premises so to be improved for the term of five years... Hassard is to occupy the premises which he now occupies... for the same rent he now pays to Rotch and Coggeshall..."

1834 Deed of November 12, 1834, recorded in LEB. 20, p. 138.

From: Nichols Hassard
To: Levi H. Gale
For: \$1000

"... release and forever quit claim... certain lot... which at time of purchase had an old stable and chaise house and now a new stable and chaise house... Easterly on Spring Street, forty feet, Westerly on Ann Street, forty feet, Northerly on a passageway leading from Ann Street to Spring Street, fifty feet, and Southerly on land now or late belonging to the widow Carey, fifty feet..."

1841 Deed of October 12, 1841, recorded in LEB. 23, p. 457.

From: Levi H. Gale
To: Sarah Bailey
For: \$10,000

"... the lot of land and dwelling house now occupied by me fronting on Washington Square and bounded Westerly on said Square, the lot of land and buildings thereon known by the name of Park House, now occupied by Nichols Hassard, bounded Westerly on the house and lot now occupied by me--also the lot and stables thereon now occupied by said Hassard, situated Easterly of and connected with said Park House, also lot of land and dwelling house thereon, fronting on Ann Street (Touro) and now occupied by Mrs. Washburn... sold at public auction October 6, 1841..."

1841 Notice of Sheriff's Sale, December 10, 1841, recorded in LEB. 23, p. 489.

Suit brought by Nathaniel Ruggles against Levi H. Gale
For: \$2860

"... lot of land with three dwelling houses and other buildings... near the State House... bounded Southerly

on Touro Street, Westerly on Washington Square, North-
erly on a street, and Easterly on a street... and one
other piece of property with barn, Easterly on Spring
Street, Southerly on land of Sarah Bailey, and West-
erly and Northerly on a street..."

1846 Deed of October 15, 1846, recorded in LEB. 27, p. 528.

From: Sarah Bailey
To: Hannah F. Gale
For: \$3694.84

"... estate, which I have by virtue of a deed from
William A. Douglas, sheriff, dated the 10th day of
December, 1841 in or to a lot of land... with three
dwelling houses..."

1860 Deed of September 29, 1860, recorded in LEB. 35, p. 365.

From: Hannah F. Gale by executors
To: William P. Sheffield
For: \$6150

"... highest bidder at public auction, held on the
13th day of August, 1860..."

1920 Deed of February 14, 1920, recorded in LEB. 108, p. 267.

From: William P. Sheffield, trustees of
To: Thomas F. Keeher and Herbert Bliss

"... one undivided half interest..."
Southeast corner house not included.

1920 Deed of February 19, 1920, recorded in LEB. 108, p. 269.

From: Mary Sheffield Moriarty
To: Thomas F. Keeher and Herbert Bliss

"... one undivided half interest..."
Southeast corner house not included.

1925 Deed of June 13, 1925, recorded in LEB. 116, p. 516.

From: Thomas F. Keeher and Herbert Bliss
To: State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
For: \$62,500

On April 27, 1925, the State of Rhode Island and

Providence Plantations passed an act "... making an appropriation for the Acquisition of land and the construction, furnishing, and equipping of a court house in the city of Newport..."

The southeast corner house was not included in the sale of the property. It was sold to the Congregation Jeshuat Israel and moved to its present location. See property description below.

1914 Deed of December 1, 1914, recorded in LEB. 99, pp. 354-55.

From: Max Levy
To: Congregation Jeshuat Israel
For: \$5000

"... parcel of land with the building and improvements bounded Northerly by Touro Street, Easterly by lands formerly of John S. Langley, Southerly by lands of or formerly of W.S. Newton, and Westerly by Division Street..."

The Levi Gale House was moved to this site in 1925, for use as a community center for the congregation of Touro Synagogue (HABS No. RI-278).

2. Date of erection: 1833-1835
3. Architect: Russell Warren
4. Builder: William Weeden
5. Original plans: None known
6. Alterations and additions: In late 1925, the house was moved from its original site which is now occupied by the Court House. Roof parapets and shutters shown in photographs taken before the house was moved have been removed. The interior has been extensively remodelled for institutional use by the present owners.
7. Important old views: Photo of the facade showing shutters and painted trim, about 1834. House shown in its original location. Photo by Bergner. Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J. Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, second edition, 1967, plate 148.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:
Records of Deeds in the Newport City Hall.
Providence Mutual Fire Insurance Company Policies, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
2. Secondary and published sources:
Newport Daily News, September 4, 1918, p. 3.
Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J. Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, second edition, 1967, pp. 118, 119, 348, 349.
3. Likely sources not yet investigated:
Thesis on Russell Warren, New York University, by Robert Alexander.

Prepared by Thomas M. Slade
University of Notre Dame
Project Historian
August, 1970

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Designed by Russell Warren, this is a particularly distinguished example of the Greek Revival in domestic architecture.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 50 feet by 50 feet; square plan; 5 bays; 2 1/2 stories.
2. Foundations: The modern foundations are stuccoed masonry.
3. Wall construction: The structure is covered with horizontal boarding with deep grooved joints. The house is articulated with rusticated pilasters at the corners and one side, and fluted Corinthian pilasters on the north and east facades.

4. Structural system: The exterior walls are framed in wood with brick fill. The interior walls are standard 3" by 4" sawn oak members on sixteen inch centers covered with lath and plaster. Recent work on the walls of the central hall revealed that when the house was moved, it was cut in half on a north-south axis.
5. Chimneys: There are four brick chimneys.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: The entrances on the north, east, and west have large four panel doors with mullioned side and top lights. There are Greek Revival moldings on the doors and doorways.
 - b. Windows: All windows are double hung with six light sashes. Shutters shown in early views have been removed.
7. Roof: The hipped monitor roof has simple boxed eaves over a deep entablature scaled to the facade pilasters. The three bay monitors facing each side give an X-shaped configuration to the roof. Parapets shown in early views have been removed.
8. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: There are one story Corinthian columned porches on the north and east sides at the center entrances. The inset entrance at ground level on the west facade has Corinthian columns.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The central hall runs east-west from the east entrance porch to the remodelled stairway, then to the ground level entrance of the west porch. The north door, originally the garden entrance, is not used. Although it appears to be the principal entrance with the house in its present location, it leads to a small triangular vestibule between the two principal rooms. These two rooms remain in original condition. The other areas of the house have been remodelled with classrooms, meeting rooms, offices, and rest rooms.
2. Stairways: The remodelled open well, U-shaped stairway is located at the west end of the central hall.
3. Flooring: The wood flooring has been covered with asphalt tile in some areas.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plaster. Complex plaster cornices remain in the principal areas.
5. Doorways and doors: The panelled doors are set in characteristically Greek Revival doorways with flat stepped architraves and mitered corner blocks. The two principal rooms have curved end walls. The northeast room opens into the northwest room through paired sliding doors which follow the curve of the end wall. In the northwest room this curved entrance is framed by Corinthian columns.
6. Special decorative features: The black marble mantels have been reused in the rebuilt fireplaces.
7. Hardware: A large box lock survives on the north door. There are some simple oval Greek Revival doorknobs.
8. Lighting: There are modern fixtures throughout.
9. Heating: There is a modern heating system with radiators.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house has been moved to a small lot on the south side of Touro Street facing the Synagogue. There is no yard space around the house.
2. Historic landscape design: None
3. Outbuildings: None
4. Walks: On the original site, the main entrance was reached through a gate and a series of terraced steps from the sidewalk bordering the mall at Washington Square.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Newport HABS Project -- 1970. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Osmund Overby, (University of Missouri), Project Supervisor, Cervin Robinson, photographer.